

Message Text

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51

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /133 W
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R 081140Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5199

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

UNCLAS GABORONE 0313

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR BC LI SF

SUBJ: BOTSWANA'S MINISTER OF STATE COMMENTS ON REPORT THAT
LIBERIA WILLING ESTABLISH DIALOGUE WITH SOUTH AFRICA.

1. BOTSWANA DAILY NEWS OF 8 MARCH CARRIED STORY ON TELEPHONE INTERVIEW BETWEEN BOTSWANA MINISTER OF STATE AND NEWS REPORTER ON REPORT THAT LIBERIA IS WILLING TO ESTABLISH DIALOGUE WITH SOUTH AFRICA. TEXT OF STORY IS AS FOLLOWS: "MINISTER OF STATE B.K. KGARI HAS EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT LIBERIAN PRESIDENT WILLIAM TOLBERT'S WILLINGNESS TO ESTABLISH DIALOGUE WITH SOUTH AFRICA. MINISTER KGARI SAID THAT THE DECISION MEANT LIBERIA WOULD BE SHIFTING AWAY FROM HER LONG-ESTABLISHED POLICY OF STANDING ALOOF FROM DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT HE HAD TALKED WITH LIBERIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER A WEEK AGO AT THE OAU'S MINISTERIAL MEETING IN ADDIS ABABA, BUT THE LATTER NEVER HINTED ABOUT HIS COUNTRY'S CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA. A REPORT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NEWSPAPER "THE STAR" OF JOHANNESBURG SAID THAT PRESIDENT TOLBERT HAD ANNOUNCED HE WAS PREPARED TO CONSIDER ENTERING DIALOGUE WITH

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THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT "ON THE BASIS OF MUTUAL RESPECT

AND EQUALITY, AND THAT HE SUPPORTED THE PRINCIPLE OF DIALOGUE WHERE THERE WAS SOME PROSPECT OF GOOD RESULTS." THE STAR ALSO REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT TOLBERT HAD FORMERLY CRITICISED NEIGHBORING IVORY COAST PRESIDENT FELIX HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY, WHO FAVORS DIRECT GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT TALKS BETWEEN BLACK STATES AND SOUTH AFRICA. MINISTER KGARI CONCLUDED BY SAYING, "WE SHALL WAIT AND SEE THE SUCCESS OF DIALOGUE BETWEEN LIBERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA, WHICH WOULD REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE OF POLICY FOR THE FORMER COUNTRY."
END TEXT.

2. MINISTER KGARI IS OUT ON TOWN FOR SEVERAL DAYS AND NOT AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT. AS THE INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED BY TELEPHONE, THERE IS NO TRANSCRIPT OF THE EXACT CONVERSATION, HOWEVER, OTHER OFFICIALS IN THE GOB EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DEPT. HAVE EXPRESSED SURPRISE OVER THE STAR ARTICLE AND QUESTIONED ITS VERACITY.
BISHOP

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